The Assimilation and Displacement of Native American Children: Historical Context, Impact, and Reconciliation Efforts

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August 5, 2024

The assimilation and displacement of Native American children represent one of the most profound and distressing chapters in U.S. history. Beginning in the late 19th century, government and religious institutions implemented policies aimed at eradicating Native cultures by forcibly removing children from their families and placing them in boarding schools or with non-Native adoptive families. These policies sought to "civilize" Native American children by immersing them in Euro-American culture, often through harsh and abusive means. The impact on Native communities was devastating, leading to significant cultural loss, psychological trauma, and intergenerational suffering. This paper explores the historical context of these assimilation policies, examines their long-term effects on Native American communities, and highlights ongoing efforts towards reconciliation and cultural preservation. By understanding this history, we aim to honor the resilience of Native American communities and support their continued fight for justice and cultural revitalization.

Keywords: assimilation, displacement, Native American children, boarding schools, Indian Adoption Project, cultural loss, psychological trauma, intergenerational trauma, Indian Child Welfare Act, reconciliation, cultural preservation, government policies, religious institutions, historical context, family separation.

Introduction

The history of Native American children being forcibly removed from their families and placed in boarding schools or adopted by non-Native families is a stark chapter in the story of the United States. These assimilation policies, driven by both government and religious institutions, sought to erase Native cultures and identities in favor of integrating these children into mainstream American society. The legacy of these practices is profound, leaving deep scars on individuals and communities. This paper will explore the origins and implementation of these policies, the impact on Native American cultures and families, and the efforts towards reconciliation and cultural preservation.

Thesis Statement:

The forced assimilation policies targeting Native American children, which led to significant cultural and familial dislocation, have had enduring impacts on Native communities. Understanding this history is crucial to acknowledging the trauma inflicted and supporting ongoing efforts towards reconciliation and cultural preservation.

Historical Context:

1. **Origins of Assimilation Policies:**

The policies of forced assimilation can be traced back to the late 19th century, a period marked by the U.S. government's aggressive expansion and consolidation of territories. As settlers moved westward, the government sought to manage and control Native American populations through treaties, warfare, and policies aimed at 'civilizing' these communities. The belief that Native Americans should abandon their traditional ways of life and assimilate into Euro-American culture was rooted in a paternalistic and often explicitly racist ideology.

Key to these efforts was the idea that Native children could be more easily molded than adults. Influential figures, such as Captain Richard Henry Pratt, who founded the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in 1879, championed the belief that educating Native children away from their communities was essential for their 'civilization.' Pratt’s infamous motto, “Kill the Indian, save the man,” encapsulated the brutal mindset driving these assimilation efforts.

2. **Government and Religious Institutions:**

The U.S. government played a central role in the development and implementation of assimilation policies. Legislation such as the Dawes Act of 1887, which aimed to dissolve communal land holdings and promote individual land ownership, also supported the removal of children from their cultural context. The establishment of boarding schools, often located far from Native American reservations, was a key strategy. These schools were funded and regulated by the government but often operated by religious organizations.

Religious institutions, including Catholic, Protestant, and other Christian denominations, were complicit in these efforts. They established and ran many boarding schools and missions with the dual aim of converting Native children to Christianity and teaching them vocational skills deemed appropriate for their 'civilized' futures. The collaboration between the government and religious organizations was integral to the widespread implementation of these policies, often justified by a shared belief in the moral and cultural superiority of Euro-American ways of life.

Through these combined efforts, thousands of Native American children were separated from their families, forced to abandon their languages, traditions, and identities, and subjected to harsh and often abusive conditions in boarding schools and adoptive homes. The trauma and disruption caused by these policies have had long-lasting effects, which continue to resonate within Native communities today.

By examining the historical context and the roles played by government and religious institutions, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the forced assimilation policies. Such an understanding is crucial for recognizing the profound impacts on Native American cultures and families and for supporting current and future efforts towards reconciliation and cultural preservation.

Historical Background

Assimilation Policies:

1. **Overview of the U.S. Government's Assimilation Policies:**

The U.S. government's assimilation policies were rooted in the belief that Native American societies were inferior and that their people needed to be integrated into mainstream American culture to survive. These policies began in earnest in the late 19th century, with a primary goal of eradicating Native cultural practices and replacing them with Euro-American values and lifestyles. Central to these policies was the notion that Native Americans should be encouraged, or coerced, to adopt agriculture, Christianity, and the English language.

Key legislative acts such as the Dawes Act of 1887 were instrumental in this effort. The Dawes Act aimed to dissolve communal land ownership among Native tribes and promote individual land ownership and farming. This act also facilitated the sale of surplus land to non-Native settlers, further eroding the land base of Native American communities and disrupting their traditional ways of life. Alongside these legislative efforts, the government actively promoted the education of Native children in environments removed from their cultural roots.

2. **The Establishment and Purpose of Native American Boarding Schools:**

Native American boarding schools were established as a direct means to implement assimilation policies. These schools aimed to isolate Native children from their families and communities to "civilize" them by immersing them in Euro-American culture. The first of these schools, the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania, was founded in 1879 by Captain Richard Henry Pratt. Pratt's model was soon replicated across the country, resulting in the establishment of numerous similar institutions.

The purpose of these boarding schools was multifaceted: they sought to provide basic education, vocational training, and Christian indoctrination. The curriculum focused heavily on English language instruction, Christianity, and practical skills such as farming, carpentry, and domestic work, which were deemed appropriate for the roles Native Americans were expected to fulfill in American society.

3. **Adoption Programs Like the Indian Adoption Project:**

In addition to boarding schools, adoption programs like the Indian Adoption Project (IAP) played a significant role in the assimilation effort. Established in the 1950s, the IAP was a collaboration between the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Child Welfare League of America. The project's goal was to place Native American children into white, middle-class families to ensure their assimilation into mainstream society.

These adoption programs were justified on the grounds that they would provide Native children with better living conditions and opportunities. However, they often resulted in significant cultural dislocation, as children were removed from their communities and raised in environments where their native heritage was neither understood nor valued.

Boarding Schools:

1. **Founding and Goals of Prominent Boarding Schools Such as Carlisle Indian Industrial School:**

The Carlisle Indian Industrial School, founded by Captain Richard Henry Pratt, was the prototype for many other boarding schools. Pratt's goal was to "kill the Indian, save the man," reflecting the harsh and dehumanizing nature of his assimilationist vision. Carlisle served as a model for over 350 other boarding schools established across the United States.

These schools aimed to completely transform Native children into citizens who conformed to Euro-American norms. This transformation involved stripping away their native identities, languages, and customs and replacing them with the values and behaviors of mainstream American society.

2. **The Daily Life and Strict Regulations in These Institutions:**

Daily life in boarding schools was highly regimented and controlled. Students were typically required to wear uniforms, cut their hair (a significant cultural loss for many Native tribes), and adopt new English names. The use of native languages was strictly forbidden, and children who were caught speaking their languages were often punished harshly.

The curriculum emphasized manual labor and vocational training, with a limited focus on academic education. Boys were trained in trades such as carpentry and agriculture, while girls were taught domestic skills like sewing and cooking. Religious instruction was a central component, with many schools conducting daily Christian services and religious education classes.

3. **Notable Figures and Historical Accounts:**

Notable figures in the history of Native American boarding schools include Captain Richard Henry Pratt, who was instrumental in establishing the boarding school system. Other key figures include Dr. Carlos Montezuma, a Native American physician and activist who criticized the boarding school system and advocated for Native American rights.

Historical accounts from former students and staff provide a vivid picture of life in these institutions. Many survivors have shared stories of cultural suppression, physical and emotional abuse, and the long-term impacts of their experiences on their sense of identity and belonging.

Adoption Programs:

1. **Description and Objectives of the Indian Adoption Project:**

The Indian Adoption Project, initiated in 1958, sought to address what was perceived as the "Indian problem" by placing Native American children in non-Native adoptive families. The project's objectives were to integrate Native children into white society, thereby reducing the perceived burden on tribal communities and eliminating the need for federal assistance programs.

This initiative was part of a broader trend towards the deinstitutionalization of child welfare and the promotion of adoption as a solution for children deemed to be in need. However, the project often ignored the importance of maintaining cultural and familial connections for Native children.

2. **Case Studies of Adopted Native American Children:**

Numerous case studies document the experiences of Native American children adopted through programs like the IAP. Many of these children faced significant challenges, including identity crises, cultural dislocation, and feelings of alienation from both their adoptive families and their native communities.

For example, the case of "Rosalie," a Navajo child adopted by a white family in the Midwest, highlights the complexities of such adoptions. Rosalie struggled with her sense of identity, feeling disconnected from her Navajo heritage and unable to fully assimilate into her adoptive family's culture. Her story is one of many that illustrate the long-term emotional and psychological impacts of these adoption programs.

3. **The Role of Social Services and Adoption Agencies:**

Social services and adoption agencies played a crucial role in the implementation of the Indian Adoption Project and similar initiatives. These organizations often operated with the belief that assimilation was in the best interest of Native children. They conducted home studies, matched children with adoptive families, and facilitated the legal processes required for adoption.

However, these agencies frequently overlooked the cultural and familial significance of Native American heritage. Their practices often prioritized the desires of adoptive parents over the needs and rights of Native children and their communities, leading to widespread criticism and eventual reform efforts.

By examining the establishment and operation of boarding schools and adoption programs, we gain a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which assimilation policies were enforced and the profound impact they had on Native American children and their communities. This historical background sets the stage for exploring the enduring effects of these policies and the ongoing efforts to address their legacy.

Impact on Native Communities

Cultural Loss:

1. **The Forced Abandonment of Native Languages and Traditions:**

The assimilation policies aimed at erasing Native American cultures often began with the prohibition of native languages. In boarding schools, children were punished for speaking their native tongues, leading to a rapid decline in language fluency across generations. Traditional ceremonies, spiritual practices, and cultural expressions were also suppressed. The enforced adoption of Euro-

American customs and Christianity left many children disconnected from their heritage, unable to communicate with their elders or participate in cultural rituals.

2. **Long-Term Effects on Cultural Heritage and Identity:**

The suppression of languages and traditions had profound and lasting effects on Native communities. The loss of linguistic diversity diminished the transmission of oral histories, traditional knowledge, and cultural values. This disruption led to a weakening of cultural cohesion and identity among Native American tribes. Many individuals who went through the boarding school system or were adopted by non-Native families struggled with their sense of identity, feeling caught between two worlds without fully belonging to either. The cultural erasure not only affected individuals but also the collective memory and continuity of entire communities.

Trauma and Abuse:

1. **Accounts of Physical, Emotional, and Sexual Abuse in Boarding Schools and Adoptive Homes:**

Survivors of boarding schools and adoption programs have provided harrowing accounts of the abuse they endured. Physical punishment was common for minor infractions, such as speaking a native language or failing to conform to strict school rules. Emotional abuse included verbal degradation, forced assimilation, and systematic efforts to instill a sense of inferiority regarding their native heritage. Tragically, sexual abuse was also prevalent in many institutions, with numerous reports of staff members exploiting their authority to harm vulnerable children.

2. **Psychological Impacts on Survivors and Intergenerational Trauma:**

The psychological impacts of these abuses were profound. Survivors often suffered from long-term mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and substance abuse. The trauma experienced by those who went through these systems did not end with them; it extended to subsequent generations. Children of survivors frequently faced challenges related to their parents' unresolved trauma, such as difficulties in forming stable family relationships, cultural disconnection, and continuing cycles of abuse and neglect.

This phenomenon, known as intergenerational trauma, has had lasting effects on the mental health and social fabric of Native communities.

Family Separation:

1. **Emotional and Psychological Effects of Family Separation:**

The removal of children from their families had devastating emotional and psychological consequences. Forcibly taken from their homes, many children experienced intense feelings of abandonment, loss, and isolation. The separation disrupted the transmission of cultural knowledge and practices from parents to children, weakening the bonds of kinship and community. The emotional scars from these separations often manifested as long-term psychological issues, including attachment disorders, identity confusion, and chronic grief.

2. **Efforts to Locate and Reunite Families:**

In recent decades, there have been significant efforts to locate and reunite families separated by these assimilation policies. Tribal organizations, advocacy groups, and government agencies have worked to create databases and support networks for reconnecting families. These efforts include the collection of historical records, DNA testing, and community outreach programs. While many families have been successfully reunited, the process is often fraught with challenges, such as incomplete records, bureaucratic obstacles, and the lingering effects of trauma on individuals and families. The reunification process is a critical step in healing and restoring the cultural and familial connections disrupted by the assimilation policies.

Conclusion:

The impact of forced assimilation policies on Native American communities is deep and multifaceted. The cultural loss, trauma, and family separations experienced by Native children have left lasting scars on individuals and communities. These policies not only aimed to erase Native identities but also created a legacy of pain and disruption that continues to affect Native American societies today. Understanding these impacts is essential for supporting ongoing efforts towards reconciliation, cultural preservation, and healing within Native communities. By acknowledging and addressing the historical injustices, we can

contribute to the restoration and empowerment of Native American cultures and families.

Legal and Social Responses

Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) of 1978:

1. **Key Provisions and the Significance of the ICWA:**

The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) of 1978 was a landmark piece of legislation aimed at addressing the high rates of Native American children being removed from their families and placed into non-Native foster care or adoptive homes. The act established standards for the placement of Native American children to protect their best interests and promote the stability and security of Native families and tribes.

Key provisions of the ICWA include:

- **Jurisdiction:** The act gives tribal courts jurisdiction over child custody proceedings involving Native American children who reside on or are domiciled on tribal lands.
- **Placement Preferences:** ICWA sets forth a hierarchy of placement preferences, favoring placements with family members, other members of the child's tribe, or other Native American families.
- **Active Efforts:** The act requires that active efforts be made to provide remedial services and rehabilitative programs to prevent the breakup of Native families.
- **Qualified Expert Witnesses:** The act mandates that qualified expert witnesses familiar with Native culture and child-rearing practices be involved in child custody proceedings.
- **Parental Rights:** ICWA provides protections for the rights of Native parents, including the right to legal representation and the right to a fair hearing.

The significance of ICWA lies in its recognition of the importance of maintaining Native children's cultural connections and its role in curbing the disproportionate removal of Native children from their communities.

2. **Implementation Challenges and Successes:**

While the ICWA has been instrumental in protecting the rights of Native American children and families, its implementation has faced numerous challenges. Some states and local agencies have struggled to comply with its provisions, leading to inconsistencies in how the law is applied. There have been instances where courts have failed to recognize the jurisdiction of tribal courts or have not adhered to the placement preferences outlined in the act.

Successes of ICWA include:

- **Increased Awareness:** The act has raised awareness about the importance of cultural preservation and the need to address the historical injustices faced by Native American communities.
- **Stronger Tribal Sovereignty:** ICWA has strengthened the sovereignty of tribal nations by recognizing their authority over child welfare matters involving their members.
- **Improved Outcomes:** In many cases, the act has led to better outcomes for Native children, ensuring they remain connected to their cultural heritage and communities.

Despite these successes, ongoing advocacy and monitoring are necessary to ensure full compliance with the ICWA's provisions.

Reconciliation Efforts:

1. **Institutional Apologies and Acknowledgments of Past Wrongs:**

In recent years, various institutions, including government bodies, religious organizations, and educational institutions, have issued formal apologies for their roles in the forced assimilation of Native American children. These apologies acknowledge the harm caused by boarding schools, adoption programs, and other policies that aimed to erase Native cultures.

Examples of institutional apologies include:

- **Government Apologies:** The Canadian government issued a formal apology in 2008 for its role in the residential school system, which has parallels to the U.S. boarding school system. While the U.S. government has not issued

a formal apology, individual states and agencies have taken steps to acknowledge their roles.

- **Religious Institutions:** Several religious organizations that operated boarding schools have issued apologies and engaged in reconciliation efforts with Native communities.

2. **Community-Led Initiatives to Document and Share Survivor Stories:**

Native American communities have taken the lead in documenting and sharing the stories of boarding school survivors and those affected by adoption programs. These initiatives aim to preserve the memories of those who suffered, educate the public, and promote healing.

Examples of community-led initiatives include:

- **Oral History Projects:** Many tribes and organizations have launched oral history projects to record the testimonies of survivors and their families.
- **Memorials and Exhibits:** Museums, cultural centers, and community spaces have hosted exhibits and created memorials to honor the experiences of Native children who endured these policies.

3. **Efforts to Revive and Sustain Cultural Practices:**

Efforts to revive and sustain cultural practices are central to the healing process for many Native communities. These efforts include language revitalization programs, cultural education initiatives, and the restoration of traditional ceremonies and practices.

Examples of cultural revival efforts include:

- **Language Revitalization:** Programs aimed at teaching and preserving Native languages, such as language immersion schools and community classes.
- **Cultural Education:** Initiatives that integrate Native history, culture, and traditions into school curricula and public education programs.
- **Traditional Ceremonies:** The revitalization of traditional ceremonies and practices, which play a crucial role in cultural identity and community cohesion.

Continued Advocacy:

1. **Ongoing Legal and Social Battles to Uphold the ICWA:**

Despite the protections offered by ICWA, legal challenges and attempts to undermine the act continue. Advocacy groups and tribal governments are actively engaged in defending ICWA's provisions and ensuring its proper implementation.

Examples of ongoing advocacy efforts include:

- **Legal Defense:** Organizations such as the Native American Rights Fund (NARF) provide legal support to defend ICWA in court and address violations of the act.
- **Legislative Advocacy:** Advocacy groups work to strengthen ICWA through legislative reforms and increased funding for compliance and enforcement.

2. **Current Challenges in the Foster Care and Adoption Systems:**

The foster care and adoption systems still face challenges in fully respecting and implementing ICWA. Issues include a lack of understanding of the act's requirements among child welfare professionals, limited resources for compliance, and ongoing biases against Native American families.

Current challenges include:

- **Training and Education:** The need for better training and education for social workers, judges, and other professionals involved in child welfare cases.
- **Resource Allocation:** Ensuring adequate resources and support for tribal child welfare programs to implement ICWA effectively.
- **Systemic Bias:** Addressing biases and stereotypes that persist in the child welfare system and impact decision-making processes.

3. **The Role of Advocacy Groups and Tribal Governments:**

Advocacy groups and tribal governments play a critical role in upholding the rights of Native American children and families. They work to ensure compliance with ICWA, advocate for policy changes, and provide direct support to affected families.

Key roles include:

- **Advocacy and Lobbying:** Engaging in advocacy and lobbying efforts to protect and strengthen ICWA and other policies supporting Native families.
- **Support Services:** Providing support services such as legal assistance, counseling, and cultural programs for Native children and families involved in the child welfare system.
- **Community Engagement:** Working with communities to raise awareness about ICWA and the importance of maintaining cultural connections for Native children.

By understanding the legal and social responses to the assimilation policies, we can appreciate the ongoing efforts to address the historical injustices faced by Native American communities and support their rights to cultural preservation and family integrity.

Contemporary Reflections

Historical Reckoning:

1. **The Importance of Understanding and Acknowledging This History:**

Recognizing and understanding the history of forced assimilation and the displacement of Native American children is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, it honors the experiences and suffering of survivors and their families. Acknowledging this painful past is a step towards healing and reconciliation. Secondly, it helps prevent the repetition of such injustices by educating the broader public about the consequences of such policies. By learning about the impacts of these historical actions, society can foster empathy and support for the ongoing struggles of Native communities. Finally, this understanding is essential for addressing current disparities and injustices faced by Native American populations, creating a more just and equitable future.

2. **Educational Programs and Museum Exhibits Dedicated to This Topic:**

Numerous educational programs and museum exhibits have been developed to shed light on the history of Native American boarding schools, adoption

programs, and other assimilation efforts. These initiatives aim to educate the public, preserve history, and promote healing.

Examples include:

- **Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian:** The museum offers exhibits that explore the impact of boarding schools and assimilation policies on Native American communities.
- **Remembering Our Indian School Days: The Boarding School Experience:** This traveling exhibit, developed by the Heard Museum, provides a comprehensive look at the boarding school era through photographs, artifacts, and personal stories.
- **Local and Tribal Museums:** Many local and tribal museums have created exhibits and educational programs that focus on the experiences of their communities, ensuring that these stories are preserved and shared.

Educational Programs:

1. **Incorporation of This History into School Curricula:**

Incorporating the history of forced assimilation and its impacts on Native American communities into school curricula is vital for fostering a comprehensive understanding of American history. States and school districts across the country have begun to include lessons on Native American history, culture, and contemporary issues.

Key initiatives include:

- **State Mandates:** States like Montana and Washington have passed laws requiring the inclusion of Native American history and culture in K-12 education.
- **Curriculum Development:** Organizations such as the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) and the National Museum of the American Indian provide resources and curricula to help educators teach this history effectively.

- **Teacher Training:** Professional development programs for teachers ensure they have the knowledge and tools to teach about Native American history and issues accurately and sensitively.

2. **Public Awareness Campaigns and Resources:**

Public awareness campaigns and resources play a crucial role in educating the broader public about the history and ongoing impacts of assimilation policies.

Examples include:

- **Public Service Announcements (PSAs):** Campaigns using television, radio, and social media to raise awareness about Native American history and contemporary issues.
- **Documentaries and Films:** Films like "Indian Horse" and documentaries such as "Our Spirits Don't Speak English: Indian Boarding School" highlight the personal and collective experiences of Native American communities.
- **Books and Publications:** Books like "Kill the Indian, Save the Man" by Ward Churchill and "They Called It Prairie Light" by K. Tsianina Lomawaima provide in-depth examinations of the boarding school experience.

Legal Protections:

1. **Strengthening and Enforcing Legal Protections for Native American Children and Families:**

Despite the protections offered by the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), continuous efforts are needed to strengthen and enforce these legal protections. Ensuring that ICWA is fully implemented and respected across all states is crucial for safeguarding the rights of Native American children and families.

Key strategies include:

- **Enhanced Training and Resources:** Providing training for judges, social workers, and other professionals involved in child welfare to ensure they understand and adhere to ICWA requirements.
- **Increased Funding:** Allocating sufficient funds to tribal child welfare programs to support their capacity to implement ICWA effectively.

- **Monitoring and Accountability:** Establishing mechanisms to monitor compliance with ICWA and hold states and agencies accountable for violations.

2. **Future Directions for Policy and Advocacy:**

Looking forward, there are several key areas for policy development and advocacy to further protect and support Native American children and families.

Future directions include:

- **Expansion of ICWA Protections:** Extending the protections of ICWA to cover other areas, such as juvenile justice and education, where Native American children face disproportionate challenges.
- **Support for Reunification Efforts:** Enhancing support for efforts to locate and reunite families separated by past policies, including funding for DNA testing, archival research, and legal assistance.
- **Cultural Competency Training:** Mandating cultural competency training for all professionals working with Native American children and families to reduce bias and improve outcomes.
- **Research and Data Collection:** Investing in research to understand the long-term impacts of assimilation policies and to inform evidence-based policy and practice.

By reflecting on this history and taking proactive steps to educate, legislate, and advocate, we can contribute to the healing and empowerment of Native American communities. Understanding and addressing the legacy of forced assimilation is essential for creating a more just and inclusive society that respects and honors the rights and cultures of all its members.

Conclusion

Summary of Findings:

The history of forced assimilation policies targeting Native American children is a deeply troubling chapter in U.S. history. These policies, implemented through boarding schools and adoption programs, sought to erase Native cultures and

identities in favor of integrating Native children into mainstream American society. The establishment of institutions like the Carlisle Indian Industrial School and the Indian Adoption Project reflected the broader governmental and religious efforts to assimilate Native Americans.

The impact of these policies on Native communities has been profound and multifaceted. The forced abandonment of native languages and traditions led to significant cultural loss and identity crises among Native Americans. Physical, emotional, and sexual abuse in boarding schools and adoptive homes inflicted severe trauma on countless children, with psychological impacts that have persisted across generations. The emotional and psychological effects of family separation further compounded the suffering of Native families, disrupting the transmission of cultural knowledge and weakening community bonds.

Legal and social responses to these historical injustices have included the enactment of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) of 1978, which aimed to protect Native American children and preserve their cultural heritage. Despite its significance, the implementation of ICWA has faced challenges, necessitating continued advocacy and enforcement efforts. Reconciliation initiatives, including institutional apologies, community-led projects, and cultural revival efforts, have been vital in acknowledging past wrongs and promoting healing. Ongoing advocacy by tribal governments and support organizations remains crucial in upholding the rights of Native American children and families.

Importance of Reconciliation:

Reconciliation efforts are essential for healing the deep wounds inflicted by forced assimilation policies. These efforts acknowledge the suffering of survivors and their families, offering a path towards healing and justice. Institutional apologies and acknowledgments of past wrongs are critical first steps in this process. They signal a willingness to confront historical injustices and take responsibility for the harm caused.

Community-led initiatives to document and share survivor stories play a pivotal role in preserving the memories of those who endured these policies. By providing a platform for survivors to share their experiences, these initiatives foster understanding, empathy, and awareness among the broader public. They also contribute to the preservation and revitalization of Native cultures, ensuring

that the knowledge and traditions suppressed by assimilation policies are passed down to future generations.

Efforts to revive and sustain cultural practices are integral to reconciliation. Language revitalization programs, cultural education initiatives, and the restoration of traditional ceremonies and practices strengthen cultural identity and community cohesion. These efforts help Native communities heal from the trauma of assimilation and reclaim their cultural heritage.

Call to Action:

Continued advocacy, education, and support for Native American communities are essential to ensure that the rights and heritage of Native American children are protected. It is crucial to uphold and strengthen the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and other legal protections that safeguard the well-being of Native children and families. Advocacy groups, tribal governments, and allies must remain vigilant in defending these rights and addressing ongoing challenges in the foster care and adoption systems.

Education plays a vital role in this effort. Incorporating the history of forced assimilation and its impacts into school curricula, public awareness campaigns, and museum exhibits is essential for fostering a comprehensive understanding of this chapter in American history. Educating the broader public about these issues helps prevent the repetition of such injustices and promotes a more just and equitable society.

Support for reconciliation initiatives and cultural revival efforts is also critical. By supporting projects that document survivor stories, revitalize languages, and restore traditional practices, we can contribute to the healing and empowerment of Native communities. It is essential to listen to and amplify the voices of Native Americans, respecting their rights to self-determination and cultural preservation.

In conclusion, understanding and addressing the legacy of forced assimilation policies is crucial for promoting justice, healing, and cultural preservation within Native American communities. By acknowledging this history, supporting reconciliation efforts, and advocating for the rights of Native children and families, we can contribute to a more inclusive and equitable future. The ongoing vigilance and commitment of advocates, educators, and allies are essential in

ensuring that the rights and heritage of Native American children are honored and protected.

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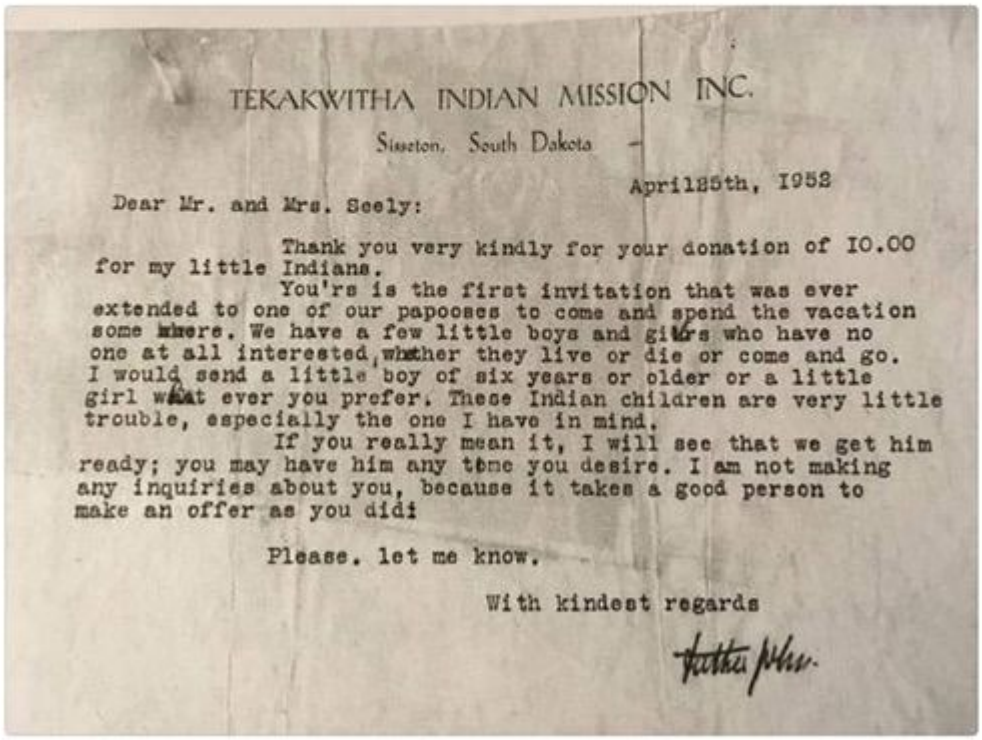
3. **U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.** "Broken Promises: Continuing Federal Funding Shortfall for Native Americans." U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2018.
    - Analyzes the federal government's shortfalls in funding and support for Native American programs, including child welfare.

This comprehensive list of references provides a robust foundation for understanding the historical context, impacts, and ongoing responses to the forced assimilation of Native American children. It includes primary sources, survivor testimonies, scholarly analyses, legal texts, and multimedia resources, offering a well-rounded perspective on this critical issue.

Daily reminder that in 1952 (66 years ago) you could buy a Native Child for $10



TEKAKWITHA INDIAN MISSION INC.

Sisseton, South Dakota

April 25th, 1952

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Seely:

Thank you very kindly for your donation of 10.00 for my little Indians.

You're is the first invitation that was ever extended to one of our papooses to come and spend the vacation some where. We have a few little boys and girls who have no one at all interested, whether they live or die or come and go. I would send a little boy of six years or older or a little girl what ever you prefer. These Indian children are very little trouble, especially the one I have in mind.

If you really mean it, I will see that we get him ready; you may have him any time you desire. I am not making any inquiries about you, because it takes a good person to make an offer as you did!

Please, let me know.

With kindest regards

Sister Mary

Social media.